

JUL 8 1946

Palm
India

Schaefer

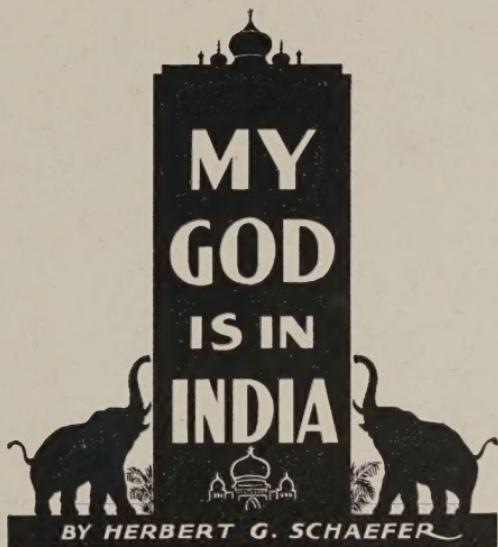
MY GOD IS IN INDIA



BY HERBERT G. SCHAEFER

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INTRODUCTION

I believe God is everywhere, but I know for sure MY GOD IS IN INDIA. I saw Him working there.

In the four true stories that follow it is my aim to pull back the curtains so that you, too, may see Him as I saw Him—working to protect His own and to rescue the perishing.



GOD PROTECTS HIS OWN

I

The Lord moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform. He protects those who believe in Him and He uses the way of the heathen unto His own ends. This is a truth which all Christians must believe, and it is a truth which has been demonstrated time and again in the far corners of the world where the Gospel is being preached. As I look back over my life in India and think of the many experiences that I have had, I cannot help but feel the full realization of this truth. For instance, there is the time when the cobra which was hiding in my play box should have bitten me, but didn't. Then there is the time when I should have drowned in the small river which ran past my home, but didn't. The occasion that stands out most vividly in my mind, however, is the day on which the Hindu people of our village tried to murder our entire family. It was only by a miracle of God that they did not succeed in their attempt. Let me tell you of this incident.

It was in the year 1927. At that time my father was the missionary located in the Sulurpetta mission station. Here he lived with mother, my brother and me.

One afternoon, just after the *dohbe* (the Indian name for the laundry man) had brought back the family laundry upon the back of his trusty old donkey, my mother decided to take the clothes upstairs. She took up one armful and then went down after the rest. However, before she could take them up, David, the cook, asked her to come out to the kitchen to help with a pie he was baking. About twenty minutes later mother took the rest of the clothes upstairs. Imagine her surprise when she opened the bedroom door and found the entire room full of monkeys. They had gotten into the clothes and had strewn them all over the room. On the dresser there sat a monkey who had fallen in

love with his image as it was reflected in the mirror. Another monkey was perched on the lampstand in the corner, trying to put on one of the shirts. Some of mother's under things, clothing which should not be exposed to the attention of the public, had been taken outside and draped gracefully over the branches of the neighboring trees.

When father saw the damage that had been done, he lost his ministerial dignity, stormed downstairs, took his .22 rifle, charged out into the garden and shot three of the monkeys before they could get away.

Now in India the monkey is worshipped, and all those the Hindus catch killing them are liable to severe punishment. My father, therefore, not wishing to create trouble, called his old gardener, Paul, and told him to bury immediately the monkeys in the garden.

Paul was a character. Believe it or not, he was both knock-kneed and pigeon-toed at the same time. He had never been a man of labor and industry. He was more of a philosopher, a man who could spend a whole day musing to himself as he lay under a tree. His old, bent frame, furthermore, lent itself more readily to this kind of life.

As Paul began to dig the holes in which to bury the monkeys, he thought to himself, "Why should I go to all this work, digging holes in this hard, sun-baked ground. It would be much simpler and easier merely to take the monkeys across the wall to the river which flows just in back of the mission compound." The more he thought of this expedient, the more it appealed to him; finally he took the three dead monkeys and buried them in the sand on the river bank.

As Paul buried the monkeys, a Hindu woman watched him from a distance. After he had gone, she hurried to the chief priests of the Hindu temple and told them of what she had seen. They called at the house of Paul that evening. There they offered him five rupees, the only stipulation being that he should show them where he buried the monkeys. Paul knew that it would

create trouble for his missionary, but the glitter of the money was too much for him. After a long period of hesitating, he took the Hindus to the spot.

The next morning my mother sent her cook to the bazaar as usual to buy the day's food supply. The cook, however, came back within ten minutes very much excited. He said that the people of the village would sell him nothing for the Schaefers nor for himself, nor would they tell him what was the matter. All that they did was to call him dirty names. Mother then sent the Indian woman who worked around the house to the village. She, too, came back with the same story that David, the cook, had told. My mother made the best of the situation and had the cook kill a few chickens and open some canned vegetables.

Little more happened until around five o'clock that afternoon. At about that time a wealthy Mohammedan, who greatly respected my father, hurried into the mission compound and demanded that the missionary see him. He said that he came with an invitation for our family to come to his house that evening for dinner as he was having a big celebration. Father, however, was unable to accept the invitation. The Mohammedan became very insistent. Finally he let slip the fact that if father would not come to his place that evening, our entire family would be killed. This was his trump card, but it did not work as he had expected. Instead of accepting the invitation my father became firmer in his refusal, saying that his duty was to preach the Word of God; and, if it entailed trouble, he would remain at his post, doing his duty as long as there was life in him. Shortly after, the Mohammedan walked slowly out of the gate, shaking his head, fearful of that which the future held in store for his friend.

That night at seven-thirty, after dinner was over and the remainder of the mission work for the day had been finished, the family went upstairs. Father relaxed in an old camp chair and read the Madras Mail, one of the leading newspapers in South India, while mother prepared us boys for bed. All of a sudden they heard a loud commotion in the village across the road. My

mother immediately rushed to the window and looked out. Imagine her horror when she saw hundreds of people moving down the road from the bazaar toward the house. Now at last they knew what the trouble was. The Hindus had raised up the monkeys on huge biers. They had practically covered them with gold and silver ornaments. Hundreds of people had been called in from the surrounding territory. There were scores of dancing girls whirling about the street, weaving among the people. There were men who brandished torches; others were armed to the teeth with knives and sickles. Dust, raised by the milling about of hundreds of feet, covered everything. Sky-rockets were bursting overhead with continual noise. The tom-toms droned out a steady, monotonous toll of doom.

Mother rushed to father and told him to do something. He, instead, merely read his paper, hardly taking time to tell her to be calm and not to worry. She was not of the same mind. She resolved that if he would not do anything, she would. She rushed to the storage room and brought out all the blankets. These she piled at the head of the stairs. Then she took the kerosene lamp and placed it near the blankets. She intended to burn down the stairs if the mob should force its way into the house. This was possible because the rest of the building was made of stone; thus only the wooden stairway could burn. These preparations having been completed, she again went to the window and looked out.

The mob by this time was moving down the bazaar road to the main highway along which it had to come in order to reach our house. It was unable to move directly from the bazaar to the house because of a Mohammedan graveyard which was located on the other side of the highway and lay between the bazaar and our home.

Mother silently watched the progress of the mob. Her face told the story of her conflicting emotions. Fear and courage were both to be found there: fear because of us children and our probable fate, courage in that she and father were the ministers

of God to these misguided people. Suddenly, a group of fifty or more men, armed to the teeth, broke from the mob and dashed through the graveyard, bounded over the road and jumped the wall which ran around the compound. "Here they come," she thought. But what is this? Instead of attacking the house, the men lined up along the wall. There they brandished their weapons.

The mob moved down the highway relentlessly until it stood before the walls and the gate of the compound. It started to enter, but met with another wall, a wall stronger and more supple than any wall of stone and mortar, a wall of sinews and knives. For over half an hour the mob fought and argued with the handful of men that guarded the approach to our house. The dancing girls whirled with increasing vigor, urging the people on to brush aside these men that stood before them and to take the house. The priests shouted and yelled; they cursed these rebellious men who guarded our wall. At last the mob moved on. Though all were ready to talk in loud voices, none was willing to face the keen edges of the knives, sickles and swords which were wielded on the other side of the wall. Slowly the dust settled and the din of the tom-toms and sky-rockets faded into the distance.

Mother breathed more easily now as she offered up a prayer of thanks to God. Then, turning, she went to father, father who had trusted so in God that he had not even stopped reading his newspaper throughout the entire episode. She went to him with increased love and admiration in her heart and with inquisitiveness in her mind as to that which he was reading. She looked down at the paper and was amused to see that he was holding it upside down. He, too, had been fearful. Any man who says that he has no fear is a fool.

The next morning father went downstairs and looked out upon the scene of action, and there he saw the men, who had saved us the night before, still guarding the wall. He went to them to find out who they were and to thank them for their help. They proved to be a *Yonadi* tribe, (one of the tribes in India

dedicated to the art of stealing) from a village fifteen miles away, a village which my father had saved from starvation three months before.

This tribe had built its village upon the land which was owned by a wealthy Brahman. This Brahman was a cruel man and had forced the people of the village to work hard and long in payment of the rent which he levied upon them for the use of his land. One day when he was returning from a neighboring village, several of the young men of the tribe attacked him, cut off his head, kicked his body into the ditch, and stuck his head on a post and stood it before the door of his house. Though the police knew that someone in the tribe had done the deed, they could do nothing about it, as there was no way of finding out just who had committed the murder. The Brahmans had therefore called together their men and had put a wall around the village. They would let no man in or out, thus hoping to starve everyone that was in it. My father heard of this and took two of his men, went to the village and proceeded to tear down the wall. When the Brahmans tried to interfere, he told them that if they did not immediately take down the rest of the wall and stop bothering these people, he would call in the English government. The Brahmans knew that they were "licked" and complied with his demands.

All this had happened about three months before the attempted murder of us Schaefers. Now the young men of this tribe again stood before my father who had befriended them. They had tried to repay their debt.

Later it was revealed that in the morning of the day of the attempted murders, a runner of the tribe had been in Sulurpetta. He overheard what was being planned and had run fifteen miles to his village, gathered the young men and had returned with them in time to save the missionary who had saved them. Today this Yonadi tribe's village, which at one time was a great den of evil, is a Christian village and all of its people believe in Christ.

Thus the hand of God protected His people and used the way of the heathen unto His own ends.

GOD PROTECTS HIS OWN

II

In time of war, many men become heroes, heroes of sweat and blood, heroes of conflict and strife, heroes of murder and death, so much so, in fact, that we are prone to overlook the heroes who have trod the dusty paths of this world for centuries over, the missionaries of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These men fill the ranks of the unsung heroes. They are men who have lived and died for God, but who have been forgotten by man. Daily, throughout the world, they are facing the armies of evil. They fight against Satan and his host of followers with no weapon other than the Word of God and their belief in this Word. These are the real heroes of the world.

When I speak of these men I think of a certain young missionary who jeopardized his very life in order that the Gospel of God might be given an opportunity to work in a heathen village of India.

This missionary was just a young man at the time of this incident, perhaps twenty-seven years old. His friends called him Carl. He was not a big man, nor did he have an impressive nature, yet there was about him an air which demanded respect. Despite his reserved manner, his people loved him. They loved him because of his untiring service to them, because of his devotion to his duty and because of the Word he taught.

Carl was located in the village of Gudur, in the Nellore District of British South India. His closest white neighbor was eighteen miles away. The loneliness and responsibility which came with his work weighed heavily upon him. Many a time he wished that he could hear his own tongue spoken again, but all

that he heard or spoke day and night was the Telegu language. Furthermore, there was always a fear within him that he would someday make a mistake which would drive the heathen from the Kingdom of God instead of drawing them to it.

One afternoon as he sat on his wicker chair in his study, trying to write a sermon for the next Sunday in spite of the intense heat which surrounded him and drew all his energy from him, a dark-skinned Indian man stepped up to his window. As the missionary looked up from his work to inquire of the man what he wanted, he was struck by the fierceness which he saw in the dark man's countenance. The eyes especially drew Carl's attention. They were like dancing spirits, everywhere, yet nowhere. They darted back and forth, taking in every detail in the room. Around his head the Indian wore a turban of bright red material. There was no mistaking him; he was a member of the *Sugali* tribe, one of the worst of the robber tribes of India.

Finally the missionary broke the silence which up till now had prevailed while the two men, one of the East and one of the West, scrutinized each other. Carl asked the man very politely if he could help him. With despair in his voice the *Sugali* asked if Carl would come to his village, Rapur, and look at the daughter of the village chieftain. The girl was sick and about to die and, having heard that the missionary fathers could do many great things, he had come to him now as a last resort.

Carl dropped his work, poured gas into his Model "A" Ford car, put his ministerial equipment into the back seat and set out for Rapur. The heat, though it was still as intense as it had been a few minutes before, now seemed to have little effect on him. For years he had been trying to open up this village and the surrounding country to Gospel work and at last he had his chance.

As Carl drove through the street of Rapur, for there was only one street along which all the huts and cow sheds were built, he could not help but notice the gloom which had settled over the village. The streets were just as full of people and cattle as ever,

yet there was a note of sadness to it all. Nor did the monotonous beat of the tom-toms add anything of gladness to the scene.

Finally Carl came to the hut of the chieftain. It was little different from the rest of the buildings around it except that it was a little bigger. As all the rest, it was made of mud and its roof was of thatched straw.

Carl had to bend low to enter the hut. As he left the sunshine of the open air, the gloom of the dark hut seemed to envelop him, depressing both his mind and spirit. He felt the presence of death and evil all around him. For a moment he hesitated, waiting until his eyes should become accustomed to the darkness, and then, with a firm step, he approached the huddled figure which lay on a crude grass mat in the far corner of the room. It was the daughter of the chief.

The chieftain stood in the middle of the room. He was not a big man, but the muscles in his arms and body betrayed the strength that was in him. His face was a picture of craftiness. In it could be read all the cruelty and ruthlessness that made him the powerful chieftain that he was. His dress was not unusual. Around his waist he wore a *pñncha* and on his feet were sandals; however, the rings on his toes showed that he was a man of means. His name was Shahavari and he never let anyone forget it.

Shahavari watched the missionary with a frown on his forehead. He did not know what to think of this white man. The village priest had warned against him. He had said that this white man was a missionary of an unjust, wicked god, a god who heard not the good, but delighted in the evil, a god who would sooner kill the daughter of the chief than heal her. Still there was something about the missionary that seemed good and right; there was a strange power in him.

Carl, without looking again at the chieftain, walked to the daughter and bent over her, talking all the time in a reassuring manner. It did not take him long to see that the child had a very bad case of appendicitis. What could he do? For years he had

been trying to open up this village to Christian work. If he could now save this child he would have a good chance. Still he would not be able to save her unless he could take her to the mission hospital in Renigunta.

Having made up his mind, Carl told Shahavari of his findings.

"No!" shouted the chief, "my daughter shall never leave my house with you."

Carl remained calm in his insistence that the girl be rushed to the hospital. Time passed. The girl became sicker. At last, in despair, the father told the missionary that the girl might be taken to the hospital, but an Indian driver would have to take her and the missionary would be detained at Shahavari's house.

Immediately Carl hurried into the hut, lifted the girl gently and put her in the car. Then he quickly jotted down a few brief words of instruction to the doctor and sent the driver on his way. As the car faded from sight along the dusty road, Shahavari turned and said, "If she dies, you die." Carl was saying a prayer: he prayed that the girl be made well, not because of his own life, but because of the great work he would be permitted to do in this village if she would survive.

An interminably long day and night passed and still there was no news of the child. Throughout the village there were groups of people here and there, whispering among themselves about the white missionary. In the beginning they had little faith in the ways of the missionary and now they had none. What could he do, he who did not even wear the proper kind of clothing? Even the chieftain was becoming more anxious. He paced back and forth, wishing over and over again that he had not permitted the missionary to send his girl away. The priest, in turn, gloated over the situation. The next time, he intimated, the chieftain and the village would listen to him unto death itself. The women of Shahavari's household were the most disturbed of all. As they went about their duties they openly cast angry glances in the direction of Carl. One old woman who was wetting down the floor of the hut with a solution of cow manure

and water was even impolite enough not to ask the missionary to move.

Carl, too, could feel the strain telling upon him. The worry and fear that was in him was bad enough in itself without adding to the situation the continual beating of the tom-toms and the hostile nature of the people all around him. Nevertheless, at all times he had the comforting promise of Jesus Christ that if he would but have faith he could move mountains; and it was only through this faith that he was able to maintain a cheerful attitude and a comforting tongue when all the rest were sorrowful.

Another day passed. Shahavari became even more sullen than he had been before. He no longer would speak to the missionary. He merely paced back and forth. The strain was almost more than Carl could bear. Even the continual walking back and forth of Shahavari began to play upon his nerves.

Then in the distance a cloud of dust appeared. It was the driver returning. The village held its breath except for the tom-tom beaters. Now they would know what had happened to the daughter of their chieftain. Shahavari stood in front of his hut and anxiously watched the car grow bigger and bigger as it approached him. Carl, however, remained in the doorway of the hut. He could not let these people see the fear and anxiety that was in him.

In a dense bank of dust the car pulled up in front of the hut. The driver climbed out, walked over to the missionary and quietly reported, "The girl is well and shall return in a week."

The whole village seemed to breathe a sigh of relief. Everyone gathered around the missionary. They wanted to see this man whose God could do such a miracle. At last things quieted down and Carl prepared to leave for Gudur.

At the last moment, Shahavari came to Carl and said, "If my daughter had died, I would have killed you. Yet you risked your life for her. Furthermore, when all of us were almost sick with worry, you alone seemed joyful, never doubting your God.

I and my people also would like to know this God in Whom you can have such a trust."

As Carl drove back to his mission station he silently thanked God for all that had happened. Not only had the child been saved and his own life spared, but also a whole new territory had been opened up to the spreading of the Gospel.

He only is a hero, who, in his fear, has courage and trust in the ways of the Lord. This missionary was a hero. Would that there were more such heroes of the Gospel and fewer heroes of blood.

GOD RESCUES THE PERISHING

I

Demon-possession has long been a perplexing problem. It has been debated everywhere from formal ministerial conventions to informal college "bull sessions." The conclusion usually reached is that it may have existed during the days of Christ, but that those days are gone forever. However, many missionaries in the Orient, and especially in India, think differently. To them demon-possession is a certain thing, a terrible reality. I myself am undecided as to what to think, for there have been strange doings which can be explained in no other way. I am thinking in particular of an incident in the life of one of our missionaries.

Several years ago in the mission field centering around the village of Puttur in the Chittoor District of South India, Rev. Carl Schwan was carrying on an intensive evangelistic campaign among the robber tribes of that hilly country. It was hard and discouraging work. At every turn he met with obstacles. The terrain itself seemed to stretch forth a forbidding hand trying to indicate that only failure is found in these hills. The cold, rocky barrenness of the slopes and the dense jungle of the valleys made travel very difficult. Hours of toil and sweat were necessary to go from one village to the next. The people were as hard and cruel as the hills where they lived, and they were as tricky as the jungle itself. They bowed in reverence to evil. Their chieftain was the man who could steal the most and get away with it. Their gods were heathen idols. Their priests were men of dark paths, of craftiness, of sorcery. They lived in tribes, fighting

continually with each other. Among these people our missionary walked. His faith was his shield, his sword was the Gospel.

The planting of God's Word in the hearts of men often takes a long time and is a difficult task; but in the end it always bears fruit. So also in this instance the work of Rev. Schwan was rewarded, for the chieftain of the largest and most powerful tribe suddenly became favorably inclined toward Christianity. He stopped the persecution of Christians in his tribe, and he listened with growing interest to the words of the Gospel. Pollaya, for so he was called, became a Christian at heart; and yet, notwithstanding all that Rev. Schwan could do or say, he was reluctant to take the final step, publicly declaring his faith through baptism. There always seemed to be something within him which held him back as firmly as a mooring rope holds a ship to the dock.

Several months elapsed. And then one day, as our missionary was floating through the village in his own sweat (it does get almost that hot in India), Pollaya came to him and asked to be baptized. There was a gleam of triumph in his eyes, and yet there was a trace of doubt.

Rev. Schwan questioned him thoroughly in the catechism and in the Bible and, then, being satisfied as to the genuineness of this man's conversion, baptized him. It was a great day in the life of Rev. Schwan, for now it meant that the work of spreading the Gospel in that tribe could continue by leaps and bounds. The future seemed to be rosy and bright. That evening, having returned to his mission station in Puttur, he went to sleep with a prayer of thanks on his lips.

Two nights later the stillness of the Indian night was suddenly shattered by a loud banging on the door of the mission house and by terrified calls for help. Rev. Schwan, who was lying asleep upstairs, took but a few moments to awaken, rush down the steps and open the door, caring little that he was shoeless and in pajamas. Throwing open the door, he saw before him our chieftain friend—only Pollaya had changed. He was no

longer a man of power and calmness. His face was twisted in agony and in his eyes there was fear such as few men have ever known. He threw all common courtesy and decency to the wind and burst in upon Rev. Schwan, diving for his hands, crying, "Pray for me, pray for me, or IT shall get me." Rev. Schwan, taken by surprise, stood for a moment, saying nothing; in that brief space of time the cries rose to a higher pitch of frenzy.

Recognizing that only prayer could help this man, Rev. Schwan led him into his office, and there the two knelt and prayed.

Rev. Schwan, who is not a gullible man nor easily moved, today bears record that as Pollaya knelt with him to pray, he felt a strange force enter the room, a force so black and so evil that the very darkness of the night seemed in comparison as the brightness of noon. Even the small, thin flame of the kerosene lamp which alone lit up the room seemed to grow smaller and dimmer. And as this force settled down about them and over them, Pollaya became more frenzied in his actions. He was fighting for his very soul. Only the power that is in prayer to Jesus Christ could keep the evil from them. Prayer alone could throw up walls around them which this devil could not penetrate.

And so the two men prayed, one of white skin from a civilized country and one of brown skin from a country of superstition; and yet both were brothers in those hours of horror. They prayed on through the small hours of the night until the sun rose once more over the hills in the east. As they prayed the force of this devil slowly faded away until once more the light of day and of God's Word shown round about them. Then only did Pollaya rise from his knees; and, being freed from the devil, thanked the missionary and left, saying that he had a task which could not wait.

A few days later Rev. Schwan looked up from his desk and saw Pollaya coming across the yard through the heat waves bounced back by the scorching earth toward the burning sun. Pollaya was a different man. From his face all doubt and fear

was gone and his sandals shuffled firmly across the ground. He had come back to tell his missionary all that had happened. Having said his salaams, this is the explanation he gave for the strange happening many nights before.

* * *

Many years ago my tribe was the weakest of all the tribes in these hills. Our days were spent in fleeing from the men of the other tribes, our nights were spent in fear. We seldom had enough to eat. My father, who was then our leader, was able just to keep us going.

One night, when the moon was only five days old and the Sembottu bird was flying south, the men from the tribe across the hill came down upon us. They were as a thousand warrior ants. We fought them; yes, even our women fought them, but we were defeated. Our leaders were taken from us. My father was killed. I, though still a young lad, became the chieftain of the tribe.

Who was I to lead so many people? Who was I that I should try to succeed where my father had failed? I did not know the way of my enemies. My tribe was weak. My warriors were dead. There was only one way open to me. My only help lay in the gods.

I went to a small plot of ground at the outskirts of the village and there I built a small mud hut, so small that I could scarcely crawl into it. Inside I place two candles and the idol of our most evil god. Then, leaving instructions that I was not to be disturbed, I crawled into my hut and shut the door. There, having lit the two candles, I knelt before the evil god which stood before me and I prayed. I prayed with all the strength in me that Chengayya, my bitterest enemy, should find disfavor with the gods, that they should take his life. Slowly the light from the candles faded from my sight and I continued to pray. After some time I fell into a coma and did not awaken until two nights and a day had passed. When I came from the hut my

people met me with shouts of joy; for word had come that Chengayya had been killed the day before by a *panu* (snake).

Thereafter, no matter who it was that I desired to kill, I but needed to go into my hut and pray to the evil god and my enemy would die. Slowly I became the strongest chieftain in all the land. My tribe waxed fat and large. And yet, though I was king over all the land, my soul was not my own. I was bound as the servant of evil. Then I heard you preaching of Christ. I heard you tell how He could cast out devils which live in the hearts of men. Then I knew that only in Him could I find rest. I listened to your words, and I prayed to your God, and your God became my God. But yet, the devil that was in me, to whom I had once sold my soul, would not let me go. I wanted to become a Christian and still I could not.

One day you came through the village and I forced myself to ask to be baptized. The devil did not bother me. I felt relieved. I was overjoyed for *Jesu Swami* (Jesus Christ) had once more cast out a devil. One thing I neglected to do. I did not tear down my temple to the evil god.

Several nights later, having been to vespers, I went to sleep, glad that I was a Christian. I had no premonition that anything would happen. I felt that I had been freed forever from the gods of my forefathers. Suddenly in the middle of the night I awoke from my sleep and found myself just crawling into my evil hut. I could feel the presence of the evil god, whom I had so long served, stronger than ever before in my life. He was in back of me pushing me on. He was in front of me pulling me in. He was enticing me and forcing me into the hut. I do not know what it was that woke me in that brief moment before I entered the hut. I believe it was our Lord. And as I hesitated there, I knew that if I entered the hut I would never again come out alive. I prayed then; for you had told me that God would hear my prayers. He heard me and gave me strength for one brief moment to tear myself from the hand of the evil god and come to you where He again protected me. When I left you the

next morning, I returned to my village and destroyed the temple of evil forever; and now I know that nothing can overpower me as long as I remain in Christ Jesus.

* * *

Today Pollaya, if he is still living, is just one more of the thousands of men in India who has found new life in Christ Jesus, in the Christ who can do all things even to the casting out of devils.

GOD RESCUES THE PERISHING

II

And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

—Hebrews 11:36-40

In these words the Apostle Paul spoke of the heroes of faith who lived for Christ in days of old, in the days when the Christian Church was still a child seeking to find a foothold in the world. Today the Christian Church in India is also a child, seeking to gain a foothold in a country where millions of pagan gods tyrannically rule over the hearts of men, from the giant Sikhs of the North to the small-boned men of the South, from the cruel Brahman priests to the suffering outcaste beggars, from the rich and royal Rajahs to the poor working peasants. In one respect they are all alike: they all must bow to the tantrums of their evil gods. Here Christianity has come, bringing with it faith, hope and love, love such as these benighted heathen have never before known, love for God, and love for their fellow-men.

But as is always the case, Satan and his powers are well arrayed against Christ and His Church. They have set up barriers which only the Lord can overcome. They block the moves of the missionaries; they persecute the Christians. Oftentimes the change of faith from idolatry to Christianity demands much sacrifice and suffering, including the giving up of all worldly possessions, home, family and sometimes even life. And yet, every year

hundreds of men, women and children come into the fold of the Church, for there they find peace and comfort. Such was the case of Devasahayam, the village cowherd.

The village, Rachelra, located near the foothills of the Black Ghats, was typically Indian in every respect. Its thirty huts were made of mud and thatching. To a foreigner they would not be fit even for cattle to live in. Palm trees and banyan trees sprawled haphazardly about the village, providing small spots of shade against the hot, burning sun. Cattle, sheep and dogs walked the streets as haughtily as any Brahmin, nibbling at everything in any way edible. Here and there a beggar lay sprawled upon a mat. There was the leper and the crippled one who had both legs twisted behind his back (done to him in infancy by his parents so that he could enjoy a lazy sort of life), and the blind widow who had lost her sight as a consequence of the dreaded eyefly disease. Sewage disposal and sanitation were unknown. In the center of the cluster of huts there was the temple of Siva before which sacrifices had been made, blood had been spilled and lives had been taken. Here it was where Govindu lived.

For many years Govindu had made his living by herding the cattle of the village. In fact, he was the chief of all the cowherds although he was only twenty-four years old. In all the years of service he had never lost an animal placed in his care.

Govindu loved his work for it gave him a position of importance in the village and at the same time provided him with a means of living without having to work too hard. By carefully saving his money he had been able to buy a piece of ground on which he built a small mud hut. Now all he needed was a wife. He had found her, too, he hoped. Only the question of dowry remained to prevent the chief priest from declaring her to be his. Yes, Govindu was as happy as a heathen can be.

One day he was herding the cattle near the village of Rachelrah when a white missionary came walking by. Govindu, intrigued by the unusual clothing and by an inquisitiveness as to that which this white man had to say, followed him into the

village. There the missionary, my father, began to preach about a new God, a God called Jesus Christ. This was something about which Govindu had never before heard. At first he smiled at such a preposterous idea; but the missionary seemed to talk with conviction. Furthermore, he spoke of his God as a God of love and not of fear, as a God who said that all men were equal before Him, as a God who once came to earth and died for all men, even for Govindu who had never before heard of Him. This was something new, something which made Govindu think for the first time in his life. Until now he had always bowed his head submissively and without questioning to his gods Rama, Krishna, Siva and others, accepting them as a child takes a dose of castor oil—only because he was told to do so. Could it be possible that all these years he had been bringing sacrifices to false gods? Could it be that he had suffered want and privation for gods which were no more than pieces of wood and stone? There was excitement in the very thought of it.

The reverie of Govindu was suddenly broken by the voice of the Brahman priest of the village who was also listening to my father. In crafty tones he asked a question, hoping to cause the missionary to stumble and thus to make a fool of him. He asked, "You say that you have the true religion and the true God. We too believe that we have the true religion and the true gods. Now which one of us is right? Is there any way in which you can show or prove that you worship the true God? I do not believe so." For a moment my father stopped and thought. If he failed to meet this thrust of the enemy he would be made the laughing stock of the community and his preaching would be in vain. Then the answer came to him even as it is promised in the Bible to all those who spread the Gospel. He said, "Yes, I can show you how I know that our God is the true God and our religion is the true religion. Do you have a rupee?" (A rupee is a silver coin worth thirty-two cents and about the size of a half dollar.) The priest said, "Yes," and gave him the rupee. Continuing, father inquired, "Do you have a lead washer?" The priest re-

plied, "No, but I shall get one." A little later he appeared with the washer. My father took the silver rupee and rang it, and then he took the lead washer and tried to ring it, but it just made a thud. Turning to the priest father said, "Which one rings true? Which is the true metal?" The priest had to answer, "The rupee." Whereupon my father explained, "So also with Christianity: when we ring it upon the table of life it rings true, but when we ring your religion upon the table of life there is a dull thud of ignorance and misery. Look about you. Whose are the happy faces, the Christians' or the Hindus'? The Christians!" Slowly the Brahman priest stooped to retrieve his silver rupee and made his way from the throng.

For Govindu, who had watched and listened intently to all that had happened, a new horizon opened before him. Even his chief priest could not stand before the truth of this new God whom the missionary proclaimed. Yes, this Christ whom the missionary seemed to love so much must be the greatest God, or at least, one of the greatest gods.

Two weeks later on a hot Sunday morning, a stranger walked into the small mud school house in the village of Konzerpallam where Sundrum, the Christian teacher was preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He came in quietly and humbly and sat down in one of the dark corners as if he were afraid to be seen. The following Sunday he was there again; and he continued to come for several months. Finally one day he came to the teacher and said, "I would like to become a Christian. What must I do?" Sundrum answered, "I will instruct you in the truth which you must know, and then, when you have learned all, the missionary will come, examine you, and then baptize you in the name of this God into the fellowship of His Church. You realize, of course, what this means. It means that you must be willing to give up all for Jesus, even your life if necessary." All this the stranger said he knew. "And what is your name?" asked Sundrum. The stranger replied, "My name is Govindu. I come from the village of Racheira, five miles away. There I am the chief cowherd."

Several months later Sundrum informed my father that Govindu was ready to be baptized; so he visited him a few days later in his village. Though my father examined him there, Govindu asked to be baptized the following Sunday in the home congregation located in Sulurpetta, over twenty miles away. When asked how he would get there, he replied that he would walk.

The next Sunday, as he had promised, he came to Sulurpetta and was baptized. Soon after the ceremony he headed for home. As he had to walk we thought nothing of the fact that we did not hear from him for some time. Then suddenly, one day at noon, a man dashed into the station and told us that Govindu, who had assumed the name of Devasahiam at his baptism, was being persecuted. We literally piled into the Model A Ford and bounced over the crude dirt road which took us within some miles of the village. We left the car under a banyan tree and hurried along on foot.

When we arrived at the village we hastened to Devasahiam's hut, hoping and praying that we would be in time. As we rounded the corner and gazed at the spot where his hut had once stood, our hearts skipped a beat; for all that remained were the ashes of the roof and the battered walls of the hut. Turning, we asked an onlooker where Govindu, the cowherd, was. He said that he knew of no such person. True, there had been a Govindu who was a cowherd, but he was no longer such. Seeing that we could not find him and that he had even lost his means of livelihood, we feared the worst.

The thought came to us that at least his bride-to-be would know where Devasahiam was; so we went to her home. She spoke to us graciously enough, but when asked about Devasahiam, she shook her head and said that she no longer had anything to do with him. Even his loved ones had turned against him because he held to Christ.

We proceeded on foot to look about the village. Finally, in the fields we found him. He had been beaten until the blood flowed and then stripped of all his clothing. His hands had been

bound in back of him and he had been tied to a post in a half-kneeling, half-standing position. There he had been left to die of thirst and starvation as the hot, piercing rays of the sun burned his life from him. His tongue was swollen and cracked so that he could no longer speak. The flies were celebrating a festival upon the cakes of dried blood on his back and chest. There was still life in him though he seemed not to hear a sound—that is, except when asked if he would renounce Christ. Then only would he move, shaking his head in rejection of such a proposal.

Slowly we cut the thongs and took him down from his cross. We took him into Sulurpetta and nursed him back to health.

Finally he was ready to leave us and to go out on his own. My father went to him and asked him if he would not rather settle in some new territory and promised that he would do all he could to help him start life over again. But Devasahiam refused, saying, "My home is in Rachelra. There I have a task to perform. There it is that I can best serve my God and my people. When I became a Christian I promised to give up all for my Christ. I have not yet given up all."

Devasahiam went back and began life anew among those who had persecuted him and thus heaped coals of fire upon their heads. And they, seeing that this lad who had once been just a cowherd was now a man willing to die for his God because he loved Him, came to believe and love this God, Jesus Christ, even as Devasahiam did.

So the heroes of faith in the Christian Church are struggling today against the armies of Satan to bring the Gospel to all men that they may believe and be saved. Let us who live in countries where our religion is served to us on silver platters look to these heroes of faith and join ranks with them in the fight of faith.

We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the Lord fulfil all thy petitions. Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God. They are brought down and fallen; but we are risen, and stand upright. Save, Lord; let the king hear us when we call.—Psalm 20:5-9.

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